

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

35

at least in the first few years of marriage, is a much more important ⁵⁹⁴ relative for a girl than even her husband. And this relationship is ⁶⁰⁶ basically one of conflict. A girl is also in a relation of conflict with her husband's sisters, married as well as unmarried, and with her husband's brother's wives.

The conflicts between the women in the patrilocal *okka* strike ⁵⁹⁶ at its solidarity. Elsewhere in south India where partition is easy, ⁶⁰² they lead to division of the joint family. But in Coorg where the *okka* is a very strong entity, and where partition is legally forbidden, they make the harmonious working of the *okka* extremely difficult.

Besides the conflicts mentioned above, certain lines of cleavage in the *okka* are obvious. The distinction between the sexes, which is present in the whole of the society, is also present in every unit of it. So is the distinction between members of different generations. Enormous emphasis is laid on seniority, and this is visible not only between members of different generations, but also between members of the same generation. The younger member has to behave deferentially towards the older.

Before the introduction, in however grudging a form, of the ⁵⁹⁴ principle of partition, and of the new ideals associated with in- ¹⁷⁸ dustrialization and Westernization, the elementary family was not ⁵⁹⁶ a powerful unit. It obtained only a grudging recognition in ritual, which was quite consistent with its relative lack of emphasis in the total structure. A tendency of recent times is the strengthening of the elementary family at the expense of the *okka*. The elementary family is increasingly becoming the real residential, commensal, and economic group with certain ties with the *okka* from which it is emerging, or has just emerged.

The existence of these divisions inside the *okka* did not prevent ⁵⁹⁶ it from acting as a unit in relation to other *okkas*. The *okka* was the ⁶²² basic unit of society, and certain offices like the headmanship of ⁴⁷⁶ the village, *nāḍ*, and the local temple traditionally ran in certain *okkas*. Again, contribution to collective tasks was on the basis of the *okka*. For instance, each local high caste *okka* had to send at least one man and one woman for every Coorg wedding in the village. Similarly, it had to send representatives to the festival of the village-deity, and for repairing roads and building bridges. All the adult men in an *okka* were required to attend a collective dance or hunt.

THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF MANGALA

87

Red colour seems to have greater ritual value than white, and 822
 silk greater ritual value than cotton. For instance, at a wedding, 585
 the ceiling of the sacred central hall is covered with white cloths, 778
 except for the part just above the bridal seat which is covered with
 red cloths. All the bride's clothes are of red silk, and according to
 the ancient marriage song the groom wore a red silk gown and red
 silk turban.

When a man (or woman) dies his relatives have to carry gifts 764
 of white cotton cloths to him. But the dead man's sisters' children, 822
 or dead woman's brothers' children, have to carry gifts of red silk 778
 cloths. Those who bring gifts of red silk cloths are considered to be
 closer relatives than those who bring white cotton cloths. It is
 those who bring red silk cloths who take part, along with the dead
 man's eldest son and widow, in the important pot-breaking rite
 (*koḍa kukkuva*) which ritually severs the dead man's connexion
 with his living relatives.

The ritual preference of silk to cotton is widespread all over 778
 peninsular India among Brahmins, and it is very likely that Coorgs 171
 borrowed the use of red silk from the Brahmins of the west coast.
 The use of red silk in ritual is not very clearly defined—at least it
 is not as clearly defined as the use of the white gown.

The turban is worn on very important auspicious occasions like 291
 a wedding. On less formal occasions a Coorg ties a scarf round his 576
 head. Both men and women tie a scarf round their heads out of
 doors. But no form of head-dress, turban, scarf, or cap, is worn 764
 inside the house. When a kinswoman comes into the house the
 hostess removes her scarf. Failure to do so would be an insult, as it
 would amount to treating the kinswoman as a stranger. Absence
 of head-dress indicates the intimacy that prevails among the mem-
 bers of a household. It is presumably for this reason that everyone,
 including the senior mourners, has to remove his scarf and
 sandals before the corpse. Such removal shows that the dead man
 and mourners are members of one household. They are kindred, [602]
 and kinship is intimacy. When two people are able to appear before
 each other without scarves they are intimate, they are members of
 the same household. It is an expression of the solidarity prevalent
 between the two.

There is a great social and ritual elaboration of the distinction 589
 between a married woman and a widow. A married woman or
garati is one whose first and only husband is alive. Remarried

THE RITUAL IDIOM OF COORGS

- 764 While white rice is used in auspicious ritual, rice yellowed with
 ● 602 turmeric is used in inauspicious ritual. At the very important
 funeral rite of 'breaking the pot', each of the mourners sprinkles a
 824 little rice, yellowed with turmeric, on the corpse before saluting it.

[57] The ritual sprinkling of rice on objects and persons usually
 accompanies salutation. In *mūrta*, the sprinkling of rice occurs with
 salutation and with the giving of milk and money presents. All
 these rites affirm a bond which exists between the subject and all
 those who perform them to him. These are members of his kin-
 group, caste-group, and village. They constitute his community.
 These rites of solidarity which affirm the existence of a bond
 between the subject and the community serve also to stress the
 importance of the particular *mangala* the subject is undergoing.

[243] It is entirely proper that rice and not any other grain or article
 should be used in the most common solidarity rite in Coorg.
 Even today rice has a very important place in the social and
 economic life of Coorgs, and formerly, before the introduction of
 coffee and oranges into Coorg, it was the most valuable crop.¹

XI

585 The ritual of giving milk to the subject follows the sprinkling
 of rice on him. This, like the other ritual acts mentioned earlier, is
 performed at every *mangala* including marriage. While the struc-
 ture of every *mangala* is, broadly speaking, the same, there are
 minor differences between one *mangala* and another. The ritual
 giving of milk at marriage makes the meaning of ritual milk-giving
 particularly clear.

On the first day of marriage *mūrta* is performed separately for
 the bride and groom in their respective homes. The bride's relatives
 and the high-caste members of her village perform *mūrta* to her in
 her house, and the groom's relatives and members of his village
 perform *mūrta* to him in his house.

On the second day, the groom's relatives go in state to the
 bride's house, and the groom's relatives perform *mūrta* to the
 bride. For this purpose they carry some of their own rice and milk
 with them.

The bride's relatives perform *mūrta* to the groom and, finally,

¹ Among the Brahmins of south India the assembled priests and relatives
 bless the bridal pair by sprinkling on them rice yellowed with turmeric.

THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF MANGALA

93

the groom performs *mūrta* to the bride. Later in the day the bride 585
leaves her natal home and accompanies the groom to his home.
Relatives of the groom who did not accompany him to the bride's
house now perform *mūrta* to the bride.

When a marriage takes place, it is not only two persons who 602
come together but two kin-groups. They come together through
the acquisition of two common objects of interest. But before
marriage the bride was only an object of common interest to her
natal kin-group, and the groom to his natal kin-group.

When a marriage takes place, there is a change in the social per-
sonalities of the bride and groom. It gives them new rights and
obligations. Some of this is symbolized in marriage ritual: for
instance, the bride loses her rights in her natal *okka* and acquires
them, instead, in her conjugal *okka*; she carries water from the
groom's *okka*'s well to his kitchen; and finally she carries manure
to the groom's ancestral paddy-field.

Every *mangala* marks a change in the social personality of the 581
subject: he moves from one position in the status system to another.
On such an occasion the group concerned performs towards him a
'series of solidarity rites. The performance of these solidarity rites
shows that the group concerned authorizes and approves of the
change in the social personality of the subject. A casteman or
relative who fails to attend the particular *mangala* is understood as
not approving of it. Relations between him and those who attend
become strained. He has effected a breach in the solidarity.

Like the sprinkling of rice, the giving of milk is a common 553
ritual act in Coorg. At the naming ceremony of a child, the mother 272
puts the infant into the cradle and says, 'Chengappa, get up to eat
rice mixed with milk.' She smears the child's tongue with a little
cream, using a gold coin to scoop the cream contained in a bowl.

A child is given solid food to eat six months after birth: and this 853
food usually consists of cooked rice mixed with milk and sugar. 585
On the second day after marriage, when the bride enters her con- 272
jugal home, her mother-in-law combs her hair and gives her rice
mixed with milk to eat. The latter dish is considered a great delicacy.

Milk is used not only on good-sacred occasions but also on bad- 272
sacred occasions. When an infant dies, a coconut-shell contain- 764
ing milk from its mother's breasts is placed over the grave; and
if it is a few months old, rice mixed with milk is placed there
instead.

606 domestic work under the close supervision of her mother-in-law. She spends most of her time with the latter.¹

The mother-in-law, too, has her duties towards her daughter-in-law, though in her case her rights vastly outweigh her duties. The ideal mother-in-law is one who is 'like a mother' to her daughter-in-law. She is expected to be kind and protective, and she is usually sensitive to what her neighbours and others say about the way she treats her daughter-in-law.

• 602
606 It was seen earlier that the ritual giving of milk is an expression of the solidarity that is, or ought to be, prevalent between the persons concerned. In the foregoing instance, the giving of milk (or sweetened dish of rice and milk) is frequently accompanied by the mother-in-law's combing the daughter-in-law's hair. Before a girl's marriage it is usually the mother, or some older female relative, who combs the former's hair and plaits it. Combing is an expression of friendliness. Marriage transfers the bride from her natal house to the groom's house, and the bride passes under the control of her mother-in-law. Solidarity rites are performed on this occasion. That the mother-in-law is equated with the mother is shown in her performing some of the duties which a mother usually does towards her daughter.

606 It is not correct, however, totally to identify the mother-in-law with the mother. The mother-in-law-daughter-in-law relationship is usually one of conflict and the reasons are not far to seek. The daughter-in-law has to obey and respect the mother-in-law as long as the latter is alive. Until her mother-in-law dies her social personality does not attain completion. Also, there is a struggle between the two women for the possession of the son, and this conflict is especially acute in the first few years of marriage. Frequently, the daughter-in-law's relatives do not help to minimize this conflict. The birth of children, however, reduces the intensity of the conflict.

XI

582 The Coorg *okka* is an exogamous unit. Sexual relations with a daughter or sister of a member of the *okka* are regarded as incestuous. A man may not marry the daughter of his father's

[71] ¹ All over patrilocal India the mother-in-law-daughter-in-law relation is recognized as a very important relation, and as basically one of conflict. See the author's *Marriage and Family in Mysore*, Bombay, 1942, pp. 191-9.

THE CULT OF THE OKKA

149

sister's son. His importance is stressed in ritual and in the exchange of gifts. 604

A man whose maternal uncle is alive may not eat curry made of bitter oranges or green plantains. A proverb tells us that a diver for pearls must make certain that his maternal uncle is holding the rope above. Diving for pearls is a notoriously hazardous occupation and the life of the diver is in the hands of the man who is holding the rope above. It requires the greatest vigilance on the latter's part. It is significant that the maternal uncle should be chosen for this task. It is a tribute to the strength of bond between a man and his mother's brother. [228]

The maternal uncle, paternal aunt, and the married sister are all required to bring gifts, provisions, and sheets of cloth called *kētāmē* at the marriage of a man. An informant told me that he remembered his mother carrying twenty head-loads of *kētāmē* gifts to her younger brother's wedding. 604 585 431

A party bringing *kētāmē* gifts is honoured with 'plantain honour' (*bālē biruḍu*): the leader of the party is asked to cut with his Coorg sword a row of three stout plantain stems fixed to the ground. A man who cuts through a stem at one stroke is a skilled swordsman: the blow must fall at an acute angle and must be delivered with firmness and strength.

The bringers of *kētāmē* gifts are given in return token gifts of cooked pork and sweet dishes. The host's band accompanies them a little distance when they leave.

Those relatives who brought *kētāmē* at wedding bring gifts of provisions and cloths called *aḍatalē* at death. They come accompanied by their band, and they are again given in return token gifts of cooked meat and sweet dishes. 764 431 602

Just before the corpse is buried or cremated certain important relatives perform a rite of segregation called *koḍa kukkuva*, the purpose of which is to break the bond between the dead person and his (or her) relatives. The relatives who have to take part in this rite are the dead person's spouse, eldest son, and 'cross-nephew' (i.e. a man's sister's son, or a woman's brother's son). The surviving spouse takes a mud pot, the son a tender coconut, and the 'cross-nephew' a bell-metal vessel with a spout at the side (*kindi*).

The three relatives march to a pond or well in the burial-ground after the bier has been deposited near the funeral pit or pyre. They have a dip in the pond, after which the family friend or his 764 602

764 wife places on the spouse's head the mud vessel filled with water,
 602 the coconut on the eldest son's head, and the spouted vessel full of water on the 'cross-nephew's' head. The family friend marks the forehead of each of these mourners with a few rice-grains yellowed with turmeric, and adjusts a ring of twisted grass on the ring-finger of the left hand. A mango leaf is put into the mud pot and another into the spouted vessel, while the eldest son is given a third leaf to carry in his hand. A hole is bored in both the mud pot and coconut to enable the liquid inside to trickle down to the ground from the head as the mourners march in state from the pond to the bier. The 'cross-nephew' has to carry the spouted vessel in such a way that a little water drips from it through the spout all the time.

The mourners go round the bier thrice, moving anti-clockwise, and at the end of the third round the spouse stands near the corpse's left shoulder, the son by the right shoulder, and the 'cross-nephew' near the feet. A little of the water in each of the three 'vessels' is poured into a dining-dish.

The three mourners then salute the corpse, after which they again go round the corpse thrice, moving anti-clockwise, sprinkling rice yellowed with turmeric as they go. After the final round is completed each takes up his original position by the corpse. The spouse touches the bier thrice with his (or her) pot and then smashes it to pieces by knocking it against the frame of the bier. As he (or she) does this, he utters the funeral cry, 'Thou art ruined . . . (husband, father, &c.).'

The son follows next and he cuts the coconut into two halves after touching the bier thrice with it. He throws the halves underneath the bier and utters the funeral cry. The 'cross-nephew' who comes last repeats his predecessors' actions, at the end of which he throws the spouted vessel under the bier.

Shri K. J. Chenappa tells me that the pot represents the affinal bond which is destroyed at death, while the seed (coconut) is carried by the son who continues the *okka*, and the 'cross-nephew' carries the spouted vessel. He represents another *okka* which is linked to the dead person's by the fact that the dead person was a sibling of the 'cross-nephew's' parent.

[594] Husband and wife constitute a legal, economic, ritual, and moral unity among Coorgs, and the sense of this unity is so great that the surviving spouse plays an even greater part in funeral rites than the eldest son, who represents the dead person's *okka*.

THE CULT OF THE OKKA

151

The 'cross-nephew' stands for the solidarity of a man with his sister. 764
602

Close relatives of the dead person bring gifts of white cloths (*muri*). These cloths are carried by women and are received by a woman member of the mourning *okka* who keeps them folded behind the corpse's head. They are used for certain purposes at various points in the mourning ritual: for instance, the mourners of the first and second orders use them for the mourning uniform of waist-cloth and shoulder-cloth; they are used to cover the corpse while it is lying in the house; if it is decided to cremate the corpse, it is stripped of the white gown and then the body is covered with white cloths; and, finally, some cloths are given in charity to beggars and servants of the Coorg *okka*. 764
602
431

Relatives who bring gifts of cloth are usually accompanied by their band consisting of horn, pipe, and drum. They also bring a rifle with them. As they near the lane leading to the mourning *okka*, all the relatives junior to the dead person dress themselves in a waist-cloth and shoulder-cloth. In addition, the women mourners unplait their hair and allow it to fall loosely over the back and shoulders. They keep the gift-cloths on their heads and they perform certain stylized movements with their hands which are suggestive of the beating of breasts and head, a common symbol of mourning all over India. As they come up the lane leading to the mourning house, a member of the party fires double shots. The band, rifle, and gifts of cloth are collectively referred to as *kellafi*. Relatives who brought *kētāmé* gifts at marriage are required to bring *kellafi* at death. The obligations of kinship require the bringing of such gifts at marriage and death, and such obligations are usually mutual between groups of kindred. In addition, the bringers of these gifts are honoured according to the traditional ritual idiom and given small gifts of cooked meat and sweet dishes. These gifts are not equivalent in economic value to the gifts brought, but still they embody the principle of reciprocity. Reciprocity does not mean equivalence of return on every occasion: equivalence is usually achieved over a long period of time. [533]
[201]

While other relatives bring white cloths, the dead person's 'cross-nephew' or 'cross-niece' has to bring a gift of a red silk cloth (*kendanoli*). Red silk is more sacred than cotton, and the bringers of gifts of red silk are more important than those who bring cotton cloths. The 'cross-nephew' or 'cross-niece' is required to bring

764 a gift of red silk cloth. The funeral song, however, tells us that both
 602 he who took and he who gave [daughters in marriage]' (*kondavanu*
 431 *kodtavanu*) brought gifts of red silk cloths. The divergence between
 [582] current usage and ancient custom can be explained by the sup-
 position that cross-cousin marriage was widespread in the past.
 The custom of cross-cousin marriage leads to the overlapping of
 different kinds of kinship-bonds; and what was to begin with
 a cognatic bond becomes later an affinal bond.

602 When a man marries, his sister's husband acts as his 'best man'
 585 (*bōjakāra*), and when a woman marries, her brother's wife acts as
 her matron of honour (*bōjakarati*).¹ This no doubt gives importance
 to affinal kindred, but ultimately it may be looked upon as one of
 the numerous expressions of the solidarity prevalent between
 brother and sister. Again, it may also be an instance of the over-
 lapping of several kinds of kinship-bonds, as the sister's husband
 or brother's wife might have been a cross-cousin before marriage.
 764 *Saméya* gifts are brought by affines at death. These gifts consist
 602 of coconuts, coconut oil, puffed rice (*pori*), cooked meat, rice
 431 yellowed with turmeric, and three *kajjāyas* (a sweet dish) fried in
 castor oil. Mourners going behind the corpse scatter the *saméya*
 articles all the way from the mourning house to the burial-ground.

When a man is dead, representatives of his mother's natal *okka*
 have to bring *saméya*, and when a woman is dead, representatives
 of her natal *okka* have to bring *saméya*. *Saméya* is also prepared in
 the mourning house.

Saméya gifts stress the importance of the natal *okkas* of the
 women who have married into the mourning *okka*. They may also
 be regarded as giving importance to cross-cousins, as an affine is
 frequently also a cross-cousin.

602 Affines, when they are not already related to each other, are
 585 expected to be extremely formal towards each other. At marriage
 the groom's party are treated with extreme courtesy—warm water
 is offered to them to wash their hands and feet, a mat is spread for
 them to sit on, and puffed rice, coconut, and parched grams
 (*hurukulu*) are given them to eat. They are also given betel leaves
 and areca-nuts to chew. They come accompanied by their band.
 As they stand at some distance from the bride's house, a party
 from the bride's house goes to them carrying the articles mentioned

¹ I attended a wedding in which the *bōjakarati* was the bride's mother's
 sister's daughter, but I was told this was not very usual.

THE CULT OF THE OKKA

153

already and accompanied by the band of the bride's house. The leader of the groom's party is asked to cut down a row of six plantain stems, whereas other relatives are asked to cut down only a row of three stems. The bride's party is treated similarly at the groom's house later.

The fathers of the bride and groom do not meet at marriage. Within a year of the performance of the marriage the bride's natal *okka* invite the groom's father to a feast and the groom's *okka* invite the bride's father to a feast. This is known as 'knowing the relatives' (*bendu ariva*).

The formality which surrounds the relations of the affinal groups lessens with the years. The two groups concerned come together more and more as the years advance and children are born of the marriage. But the formality never totally disappears. Distance and respect may be said to characterize affinal relations for ever. The earlier occasions in which they come together are covered with ritual—ritual respect is scrupulously shown, feasts are given, and gifts are exchanged.

Respect should be shown to parents-in-law, and this is especially required from a girl towards her mother-in-law. A girl does not come very much into contact with her father-in-law, whereas she spends the best part of the day with her mother-in-law, working under the latter's supervision in or about the kitchen.

XIII

The parents of a girl have a right to recover the presents of cloth and vessels which they gave their daughter at her marriage if the girl dies without leaving behind any children in her conjugal *okka*. But if children have been born of the marriage, the mother's personal property goes to them.

The legal position is not, however, as clear as we have made it out to be owing to the fact that lawyers trained in Hindu law have regarded the presents given to the bride by her natal *okka* as *stridhana* (woman's wealth), according to which the movable property presented to a bride by her relatives becomes her own property absolutely. If such an interpretation is accepted, the presents given by Coorg parents to their daughter at her wedding will come to be governed by the same laws as those prevailing among high-caste Hindus all over India. This seems to be another

are performed at the nellaki. After this formal arrangement of the marriage neither party may withdraw from their agreement. 584

As soon afterwards as all the preparations have been made, a variable period but seldom more than a month or two later, the wedding takes place. The Coorg season for weddings is between the end of the paddy-harvest and the breaking of the S.-W. monsoon, i.e. during the months of April and May. In ancient times any other period was inconvenient and even with the advent of transportation by motorbus and automobile no change has taken place. The day for the marriage is frequently fixed nowadays by an astrologer (kanič), and the song gives ample recognition to this, though in this it may reflect the conditions of the last few centuries rather than of more ancient times. The ceremonies take place at the houses of the bride and bridegroom respectively. Ideally these should be the traditional central houses of the respective sibs (called aynumane). In very many cases however these houses are most inaccessible and perhaps not even occupied, and in such cases the actual dwelling-houses of the families are the scene of the ceremonies. 585 [132] [178] [791] [533] [787] [342] [614]

The wedding ceremonies are now to be described. On the first day each of the two persons to be married goes through the murta ceremony in the house of his or her family. It is essentially a ceremony in which the person is blessed and prosperity and fertility are ensured by the sprinkling of rice on the person and feeding him or her with milk by the members of his or her father's and mother's sibs. Early on the following morning the bridegroom arrives at the bride's house. Rice is again sprinkled and milk fed, to the bridegroom by members of the bride's father's sib, to the bride by members of the bridegroom's father's sib. Then follows the sammanda ceremony, by which the bride is made a member of her husband's sib. This is the essential ceremony of the marriage. The bride is then conducted from her house, being stopped as she leaves by her male cross-cousin, and is brought to her husband's house. There she performs the ceremony of carrying water into the house, as an earnest of the household duties that she will perform as a wife in this house. On that night the marriage is consummated. Details of the various ceremonies now follow. 585 614

On the first day of the wedding two separate but identical ceremonies called murta are held, one at the bride's house the other at the bridegroom's. To each all the members of the respective sib and of the original sib of the mother of the central figure of the ceremony and all the members of the village sibs are invited. Preparations for the affair, cooking, cleaning and the like, have previously been made by the members of the house assisted by the closest or even by all of the sib-members. The bridegroom bathes on this morning in the bath-house; seven married women, who are not widows, from among his relatives, e.g. his sisters, his mother's and father's sisters, his uncles 585 [614] [515] [602]

585

- [515] wives, but not his brothers' wives, unless they are much older than himself,¹ must pour over him one pot of water each. After this he is arrayed in full Coorg dress, including the turban, dagger, and sword, and puts on heavy bangles and neck-chains. His long coat (kupia) should be white, as all such garments were [602] anciently. The bride likewise is bathed by women and girls from among her relatives, no one being barred from this office except widows. She is dressed in her best sari and headcloth and decorated with a great number of ornaments, toe and finger rings, earrings, necklaces and chains, and hair-ornaments. When the guests have all arrived in the early morning (all wearing Coorg dress, though the men need not wear white coats), the bride and groom in their respective houses are brought forth [292] into the nellaki. Each is wearing in addition to their full dress a cloth over the head, the bride's covering her face but left unfastened in front. Each, conducted by a near relative or friend of the same sex (in the man's case frequently the husband of his sister, in the woman's the wife of her brother), circles three times in clockwise direction a stool between two standing lamps and then is seated facing to the east on the stool, which has been covered with a cloth. The nellaki was anciently the place for the ceremony; at present it often takes place in the yard of the house in a pandal built for the occasion and fitted with the stool and two [342] standing lamps, but not with a hanging lamp. This shift of [178] scene is due to the fact that the house is frequently too small to [171] accommodate all the guests. During the ceremony four Coorg [533] musicians beat on drums and sing the wedding song (this I hope to present and discuss linguistically elsewhere).
- [614] When the central figure of the ceremony is seated, his or her mother, or if the mother is dead or a widow, the eldest married woman in the sib who is not a widow, stands in front [682] of him or her. She takes from a large flat plate of rice a handful and throws some first to the hanging lamp, apparently as an offering to the ancestors of the sib (if the ceremony is outside in the pandal, this is omitted), then over her head towards the sun;

[607] ¹ Younger ones are said to be restrained by shyness, but the fact is that they are women who are referred to as *macini* and are possible spouses of the man, in case they should be widowed and he should become a widower. Such relatives of a man, viz. all those whom he classes as *macini* and *mammé*, whether they are blood-relations (i.e. cross-cousins) or related merely by marriage, are the subjects of taboos with relation to him. They begin to operate when both parties have attained puberty. They may not touch one another, except in case of real necessity, nor may they sit on the same bench. Other specific taboos operating between these cross-cousins seem to be lacking, since in general Coorg men and women observe about the same taboos in speech and action that are observed in polite circles in western society. The specific taboos do not operate between any other classes or relatives; it may be observed that the taboo on touching is merely a very small extension of the usual reluctance of a Coorg man to touch a woman.

[605]
[834]